Strategy Research Project

Dangerous Gulf?
The Relationship between America and its All-Volunteer Military

by

Commander James Harvey Black
United States Navy

United States Army War College
Class of 2013

REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE

Form Approved
OMB No. 0704-0188

1. REPORT DATE *(DD-MM-YYYY)*	**2. REPORT TYPE**	**3. DATES COVERED** *(From - To)*
xx-03-2013	STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT	

4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE
Dangerous Gulf?
The Relationship between America and its All-Volunteer Military

5a. CONTRACT NUMBER

5b. GRANT NUMBER

5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER

6. AUTHOR(S)
Commander James Harvey Black
United States Navy

5d. PROJECT NUMBER

5e. TASK NUMBER

5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER

7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)
Dr. Tami D. Biddle
Department of National Security and Strategy

8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER

9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)
U.S. Army War College
122 Forbes Avenue
Carlisle, PA 17013

10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)

11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)

12. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT
Distribution A: Approved for Public Release. Distribution is Unlimited.

13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES
Word Count: 5,478

14. ABSTRACT

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15. SUBJECT TERMS
Demographics, Culture

16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			**17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT**	**18. NUMBER OF PAGES**	**19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON**
a. REPORT	**b. ABSTRACT**	**c. THIS PAGE**			**19b. TELEPHONE NUMBER** *(Include area code)*
UU	UU	UU	UU	36	

USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

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Commander James Harvey Black
United States Navy

Dr. Tami D. Biddle
Department of National Security and Strategy
Project Adviser

This manuscript is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the Master of Strategic Studies Degree. The U.S. Army War College is accredited by the Commission on Higher Education of the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools, 3624 Market Street, Philadelphia, PA 19104, (215) 662-5606. The Commission on Higher Education is an institutional accrediting agency recognized by the U.S. Secretary of Education and the Council for Higher Education Accreditation.

U.S. Army War College
CARLISLE BARRACKS, PENNSYLVANIA 17013

Abstract

Title:	Dangerous Gulf? The Relationship between America and its All-Volunteer Military
Report Date:	March 2013
Page Count:	36
Word Count:	5,478
Key Terms:	Demographics, Culture
Classification:	Unclassified

Senior civilian and military leaders have recently expressed concern about the relationship between the American public and the All-Volunteer Force that serves it. However, before a new round of contemporary discussions and concerns about civil-military relations is started, it is imperative that we first answer the question “Who serves?” Reliable information about this issue must be the foundation of all other discussions about civil-military relations in order to prevent misconceptions from clouding the debate. Secondly, an examination of the cultures of the U.S. military service and the civilian population is warranted to determine in what areas there may be a difference, and whether any gap is a danger to the continuation of a healthy relationship between the U.S. military and the American people. Finally, this strategic research project offers courses of action to minimize the forces that might contribute to the growth of any gulf between the American public and the All-Volunteer Force.

Dangerous Gulf?
The Relationship between America and its All-Volunteer Military

"Never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few."[1] These words, spoken by Prime Minister Winston Churchill nearly one year after the beginning of World War II, were meant to describe the debt that the people of Great Britain owed to those men and women of the Royal Air Force during the Battle of Britain. As appropriate as those words were to the situation faced by the allies in August of 1940, they may be just as appropriate today in describing the situation faced by America's military.

America's armed forces have been engaged in a worldwide war against violent extremism since September 11, 2001.[2] During this time, less than one percent of the American population has served on active duty with the military.[3] It is this lack of participation by 99% of the American population that has led senior military and civilian leaders to raise concerns about a growing civil-military gap. This concern was expressed by then Secretary of Defense Robert Gates in a speech at Duke University in September of 2010, warning of the risk of "developing a cadre of military leaders who are cut off politically, culturally and geographically from the population they are sworn to protect."[4] His warning was reiterated a few months later by Admiral Mike Mullen, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs at the time, in a speech delivered at the National Defense University Conference on Military Professionalism. ADM Mullen told the audience that despite the significant improvement in public support of the military since the end of Vietnam, "we [the military] don't know the American people and the American people don't know us."[5]

This is not the first time a senior military or government official has expressed concern about the relationship between the American public and the all-volunteer military that serves it. Civil-military scholars Peter Feaver and Richard Kohn have argued that since the end of the Second World War there have been three waves of literature expressing concerns about civil-military tensions. The first of these ran from 1945 to the beginning of the All-Volunteer Force (AVF) in 1973. The second focused on the transition to the AVF, and included the period through the end of the Cold War. The third wave began with the end of the Cold War.[6] Though each of these eras was distinct, and had its own particular set of problems and challenges, a similar set of questions arose, in each era, about civil-military relations. The questions "Who serves?" and "Who ought to serve?" came up with regularity. Since the inception of the AVF, only a small percentage of the American public has served in the military. But this level of participation largely returned the nation to what had existed in earlier eras when US political leaders, safe behind two oceans and with no urgent threat from north or south, felt no compulsion to maintain a large standing military.

The concerns raised by Secretary Gates and CJCS Mullen point to a new round of contemporary discussions, and concerns about, civil-military relations in the second decade of the 21st century. Some of these discussions contain echoes of past arguments, and some are new and distinct from the past--specific to the problems faced by the US at this juncture in its history. This essay will investigate aspects of the contemporary debate over civil-military relations in the US. In particular, it will analyze the old but terribly important question of "Who serves?" Reliable information about this issue must be the foundation of all other discussions about civil-military relations. When

misconceptions exist about who serves (and why), other misconceptions tend to crop up and cloud (or crowd out) sensible debates about civil-military affairs. After investigating this question I shall go on to examine another piece of the debate; it asks whether there has developed an unprecedented distance between the culture of military institutions in the US, and the culture of the civilian population.

Demographics

Today it is a general expectation in American society that the armed forces should represent a cross section of the country's military aged males, and to a lesser extent that of its female population as well.[7] But from the moment the AVF began (on 1 July 1973), meeting this general expectation has proven to be a challenge. Many worried that the military would attract a disproportionate number of young African-Americans, young people from poor families, or a disproportionate number of people from a particular geographic region, like the South.[8]

Over the past two decades the geographic distribution of military recruits has shifted significantly to the South. While the South has always been a steady source of recruits, its importance to the military has increased greatly as it provides more recruits today than its share of the nation's 18 to 24 year-old population would seem appropriate. In contrast, the Northeast's contribution of recruits in the target age group has decreased dramatically since 1980.[9] The Congressional Budget Office points to the differences in local civilian wages and salaries as compared to military pay and benefits, unemployment rates, college enrollment, and other demographic patterns as well as "changes in the overall geographic distribution of the U.S. Population" as factors in the share of military recruits that a region provides.[10] However, it may be argued that the

closing of bases in the northeast and west during the Clinton Administration also contributed to this change in representation.[11]

By 2010, approximately two-thirds of all active duty personnel stationed in the United States or its territories were located in the south.[12] With this preponderance of military personnel and bases in the south, the military is able to develop relationships with southern civilian communities. These partnerships may produce increased familiarity, understanding and support for both communities, and may positively affect recruitment efforts. This strong presence of active duty personnel, coupled with a focused regional recruitment effort due to the South's population size, fosters Southern demographic dominance in the U.S. military.[13]

How well the military reflects the racial mix of society has been a serious issue dating back to the original debate over the transition to an all-volunteer military.[14] With the termination of the draft, there was concern that the AVF would be costly and unrepresentative of the American people.[15] Some were vocal in their expression of fear that a predominantly white officer corps would lead a predominately black enlisted force. Similarly, others worried about the possibility of a white Navy and Air Force, a white Army Reserve, and a black regular army.[16] After the expiration of the draft, the Army experienced an initial spike in the percentage of active duty forces comprised of African-Americans, adding fuel to the existing concerns that the Army would become "all black." However, in 1974 Secretary of the Army Howard "Bo" Callaway reported that the trend of an increase in the percentage of male enlistees identifying as African-American may have peaked.[17]

Of all the services, the Army experienced the most significant overrepresentation of African-Americans in the enlisted ranks in the years shortly after the Vietnam War, followed by the Marines and then the Air Force; the Navy experienced underrepresentation.[18] Army officials worried that significant overrepresentation of one racial group would conflict with the ideal of the Army as a mirror of the American society as a whole. Therefore, the Army subsequently shifted its recruiting efforts and transferred recruiters out of areas with a large black population, under the claimed effort to achieve better geographical representation of its recruits.[19]

The Army was not the only service to engage in selective recruiting in the early years of the AVF. In 1976, the Navy initiated a program to ensure that the burden of less desirable jobs would not fall to any specific demographic group. However, this effort at parity was perceived as discriminatory towards African-Americans by limiting their opportunities to join the Navy, and was therefore discontinued within three years.[20]

The issue of racial representation in the armed forces is an extremely contentious one and has been a regular topic of choice for politicians and civic leaders. An example of this would be a 2002 opinion piece in *The New York Times* by Representative Charles B. Rangel calling for the reinstatement of the draft. A key assumption in support of his argument was that, without a draft, a disproportionate amount of the cost for the country's wars would be borne by minorities in the armed forces.[21] A similar claim was expressed by political pundit Chris Matthews in an interview with Phil Donahue on MSNBC a few months earlier.[22] However, the facts do not support these assertions.

As of 2010, 70 percent of the active duty forces reported themselves as white. The remaining 30 percent were made up of various minorities, with African Americans accounting for 17 percent of service members, Asians 3.7 percent, American Indians 1.7 percent, and Pacific Islanders representing 0.6 percent of the force; 2.1 percent reported themselves as multi-racial, with the remaining 4.9 percent reported as other or unknown.[23] No grievous imbalance presents itself when the race distribution of the armed forces is compared to that of the United States' population.

According to the 2010 Census, the portion of the population reporting their race as Caucasian (either alone or with at least one other race) represented about 75 percent of the total population. About 14 percent of the total population reported their race as African-American, either alone or with at least one other race. People who classified themselves as Asian alone or in combination accounted for 6 percent of the total population. The two smallest alone-or-in-combination categories were American Indian and Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander, making up 2 percent and 0.4 percent of the total population, respectively. Those people who identified as some other race alone or in combination make up 7 percent of the total population.[24]

Comparing the ethnic make-up of the active duty forces with the distribution of deaths for Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom, based on race or ethnicity as of 2010, the distribution of casualties is somewhat disproportionate towards Caucasians (74.6 and 79.4 percent respectively) and Pacific Islanders (1.2 and 1.1 percent respectively). The casualties absorbed by the other minorities are either on par with their percentage of the total force, or significantly less.[25]

The socioeconomic background of military accessions is another demographic that has been historically criticized, and continues to be a topic of heated debate.[26] One of the major objections raised to transitioning to the AVF was that the nation's poor would account for a disproportionate amount of the required man power.[27] This argument against the AVF was founded in the perception that the Vietnam War was a "rich man's war, poor man's fight" due to the ease by which the children of well-to-do businessmen, politicians and athletes were able to avoid the draft.[28] Due to the belief that the enlisted ranks of the AVF were filled with young people who had limited economic opportunities, antimilitary organizations like the Central Committee for Conscientious Objectors (CCCO) and War Resisters' International, derided the AVF as a defacto "poverty draft."[29]

The belief that the military, in particular the Army, continues to be an option for only the poor or underprivileged persists even today, despite the evidence to the contrary.[30] U.S. Department of Defense data from 2000 to 2004 shows that households in the mid-scale and upper socioeconomic strata provided approximately 70 percent of the military's new recruits and that less than 30 percent came from "Poor" and "Downscale" households ("Poor" and "Downscale" households account for approximately 30 percent of U.S. 18-24 year old representation).[31] Indeed, the contribution from that portion of the population deemed "wealthy" was within a percentage point of their fair share, based on US socioeconomic data. Additionally, this data shows that as the United States became engaged in ground combat operations in Afghanistan in 2002, the percentage of new recruits from the lower socioeconomic portion of society decreased slightly while the percentage of new recruits from the

wealthier portions of society increased.[32] This trend continued in 2006 and 2007 with those neighborhoods representing the top one fifth wealthiest in the nation accounting for nearly 25 percent of enlisted recruits while those neighborhoods in the lowest quintile of household income provided less than 11 percent of enlistees.[33]

Political affiliation is probably the most significant gap of concern between the members of the armed forces and the overall American population, and the one that has the greatest potential impact on the overall effectiveness of the military and U.S. foreign policy. Those who worry about this issue fear that politicization of the military could result in the civilian political leadership distrusting its senior military advisers and perceiving them as possible political threats. This situation would risk hampering the free flow of information and candor that the civilian leadership requires to make educated and reasoned decisions. A similar concern is that politicization might tempt incumbent political leaders to select senior military advisers based on their political inclinations and future party affiliation, instead of the individual's military experience and capability.[34]

These concerns are not idle. Between the years 1976 and 1996 the percentage of military officers who saw themselves as nonpartisan or politically independent decreased from more than 50 percent to less than 20 percent, with the majority of them coming to identify with the Republican Party.[35]

The Republican Party took advantage of this trend in the 1980s as President Ronald Reagan courted the military as an important constituency during elections, while the Democrats in the Clinton Administration were judged by some as "politicizing the senior officer selection process to an unprecedented extent" in response to what they

viewed as resistance to some of that administration's policies by the military's senior leaders.[36] Similarly, during the 2000 election, the Gore campaign worked to mobilize crucial portions of the Democratic base such as African-Americans, while the Bush campaign went to great lengths to energize military personnel to vote. When it became apparent that military absentee ballots might serve as a potential deciding factor due to the tightness of the race in Florida, Republicans accused Democratic activists of curtailing the military vote by disputing absentee ballots, further exacerbating the lack of trust between the military and the Democratic Party.[37]

The consequences of an absence of trust are worrisome since they threaten the overall civil-military relationship in the US – a relationship built on trust. Bob Woodward indicates in his book, *Obama's Wars*, that some of these stresses were in play given the manner in which senior Democratic officials in the Obama administration interacted with members of the military and veterans. Woodward also suggests that despite President Obama's efforts to reach out to the military community by including former flag officers in his administration, a fault line developed in the administration as his team of political counselors in the White House came to view the senior military leaders and veterans in the administration as outsiders.[38]

Modern studies have indicated that up to 60 percent of service members identify themselves as Republicans compared to approximately 13 percent identifying as Democrats, but other surveys depict a more even balance.[39] According to a 2011 survey conducted by the Pew Research Center approximately 48 percent of all veterans claim to be politically conservative. However, only 40 percent of those veterans who joined the military after the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks identify themselves as

politically conservative, putting them more in sync with the percentage of the general public that profess a conservative political ideology (37 percent).[40] However, there is still a danger of senior civilian leadership viewing the senior military leadership through a partisan lens. Surveys have presented the officer corps to be more conservative and to identify as Republican to a greater extent than most enlisted personnel. This is notable since enlisted personnel outnumber officers by a significant ratio.[41]

That military officers tend to identify with the Republican Party should not come as a surprise given the demographics of the military's officer corps. During the 2012 election, Republican candidate Mitt Romney garnered 47 percent of the Southern vote as compared to only 40 percent of non-Southern vote.[42] As previously mentioned, the South provides a disproportionate percentage of military personnel, including officers. To provide an example of this disparity, in 2007 the South provided approximately 37 percent of the Army officers commissioned through the U.S. Military Academy (USMA), and approximately 46 percent of the U.S. Army officers commissioned through the Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) program.[43] But the percentage of ROTC-commissioned officers from the South may decrease somewhat over the next few years as the repeal of the U.S. government's "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy has lead northern universities that had previously banned ROTC to reopen their doors and allow ROTC to return to campus.[44]

In addition to the geographic disparity, the racial composition of the officer corps also lends itself to identifying with the Republican Party. According to exit polls during the 2008 Presidential election, Candidate Barack Obama carried 41 percent of the vote for white men.[45] Since the majority of white males do not identify with the Democratic

Party it is reasonable to expect the political preference of the officer corps to closely mirror that same preference given its racial and gender composition (females make up approximately 15.5 percent of officers overall).[46] As a typical depiction of the racial composition of all males commissioned as officers in the U.S. Army through ROTC, in the year 2007 72 percent identified as white. Approximately 80 percent of the males commissioned through the USMA in 2007 identified as white.[47]

Culture

The differences between military culture and that of the civilian populace it serves is another key theme in the literature on civil-military relations. The military has a distinct culture that is unique in its organizational structure, terminology, and expected standards and behaviors.[48] In their book, *American Military Culture in the Twenty-First Century,* Ulmer, Collins, and Jacobs define culture as "the prevailing values, philosophies, customs, traditions, and structure, that over time have created shared individual expectations within an institution about appropriate attitudes, personal beliefs, and behavior".[49] As such, an organization's culture directly corresponds to its output or design, and the United States military is designed for the specific purpose of fighting and winning the nation's wars. As the U.S. military has gained experience, it has cast aside organizational aspects that detract from the accomplishment of its goals and institutionalizes those that support its purpose. The end result is the development of an organizational culture that is passed on from one generation to the next in a manner similar to human culture more generally.[50]

Service members come from a variety of cultural backgrounds that are as diverse as the United States itself, and the US military employs service identity to create and enhance uniformity amidst its members and reinforce conformity to the rules, policies

and procedures that govern the overall mission.[51] To the outsider, the military may appear as an aggressive, male-dominated, authoritarian society. The military's group-oriented mentality, with an emphasis on readiness, cohesion, discipline, morale, and the infamous all-encompassing "military necessity," seems to stand in stark contrast to civil society's highly regarded virtues of individualism, consumerism, tolerance and gender-neutrality. To some service members, today's civil society is seen as soft, complacent, self-absorbed and detached from the realities of the threats that face America.[52]

Thomas Ricks' 1997 article in *The Atlantic Monthly* highlights this chasm to the extreme as he describes the transformation that Marine recruits undergo while in boot camp, and their impressions of the people and lives they left behind upon enlisting. The young Marines in Ricks' article leave boot camp and return to their homes to discover that they no longer feel connected to their previous lives, and that they no longer have much in common with many of those they once considered friends and/or family.[53] Based solely on Ricks' article, one would assume that this is a phenomenon isolated to the military, but in reality it is a common response for people who go through other types of life-altering transformations like finding or converting to a new religion, or even turning Vegan. The pronounced changes brought on by a dramatic change in identity can put apparent distance between one's past and present.[54] Because of what it asks of its people, the military does impose a strong set of norms on its personnel. For young recruits, the rapid shift in outlook and behavior can seem quite dramatic, but the changes are driven by mission imperatives. Most Americans understand this, and admire military values.[55]

There will always be a discrepancy between the strictness and discipline required of an American service member and the pronounced individualism of the society that he/she is sworn to defend. However, to some individuals it may appear that this disparity has become more noticeable in the age of the AVF.[56] The formal establishment and publication of military (service) "core values," meant to guide service members in making ethical decisions, may be seen as a contributing factor in the widening of a culture gap. During the mid-1990s the military began to realize that the preponderance of cultures and religions in America meant that new accessions rarely entered service with a single ethical framework from which to guide their actions and behavior. Consequently each branch of the military seeks to transform the values of new officers and enlisted personnel into institutional "core values."[57] Each service has defined their "core values" based on that service's core functionalities and mission, its understanding of society's popular culture, values and ethics, and the personal values of the Service Chiefs who were leading efforts to formalize and promulgate these "core values."[58]

The publication of institutional "core values" by the military, coupled with the requirements set forth in the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ) result in military personnel being held to a standard distinct from that of society as a whole. This is not a case of military members placing themselves above society. Instead they are abiding by the standards established by the people through the legislative process as the UCMJ is Federal Law enacted by the representatives of the people in the United States Congress.[59] Established in 1950, the UCMJ has undergone two major revisions and

several amendments to keep it in sync with the ever-evolving values of American society.[60]

Service members represent America and its ideals to the rest of the world, and they are expected to do so under conditions of stress, danger and uncertainty. Lapses in ethical behavior such as the rape of an Okinawan woman by two U.S. sailors in 2012, the desecration of dead Taliban fighters by U.S. Marines in 2011, and the mistreatment of Iraqi prisoners by U.S. Soldiers in 2003-2004 all had a detrimental impact on the United States' image, its relationships with critical allies and partners. Each episode damaged the military's reputation with the American public and in the eyes of world opinion.[61] By requiring the constant devotion to high standards, military leaders expect servicemen and women will have a strong foundation to rely on when posed with difficult choices in times of stress and pressure.[62]

While the cultural differences between the military and the civilian populace it serves may sometimes seem vast and difficult to work through, they are trumped by a shared cultural belief. That belief is the supremacy of civilian control of the military. Although many today may assume that civilian control over the military has been a constant in U.S. history, there have been periods where civilian supremacy was challenged. The "Revolt of the Admirals" in the late 1940s is a stark example of military leaders attempting to subvert civilian control, and the undermining of President Harry Truman's strategic direction during the Korean War by General Douglas MacArthur is often cited as the most famous breakdown of the military's abdication to civilian control.[63] In both instances, the senior military leaders involved were subsequently relieved by their civilian overseers as they attempted to reassert civilian control.

Today the American military culture holds civil supremacy in policy formulation and the authority to issue lawful orders and direction as inviolable. Military leaders expect the civilian leaders' decision-making process to be inclusive, seeking the technical expertise of senior military leaders, giving due consideration to advice given. They expect civilian leaders to continually engage during policy execution. However in the end, military leaders fully understand that the civilian leadership is ultimately responsible for determining policy and approving military strategies for implementation.[64] This is how it must be inside a democratic governance structure with elected officials representing the will of the people.

The consequences when senior military leaders stray from the accepted institutional norm and either disregard the direction of the civilian leadership or exhibit open disrespect is often swift and severe. The firing of General Stanley McChrystal as the commander of U.S. forces in Afghanistan by President Obama (when he and his staff openly disparaged civilian leaders within the Obama Administration) is a prime example of this. Although General McChrystal's command was on the cusp conducting a major offensive in Kandahar, both civilian and military leaders believed that it was necessary to relieve General McChrystal.[65]

There are other areas where the division between the military's culture and American civilian culture is not as great as one might assume. The issue of allowing openly gay men and women to serve in the military is one of those areas. The military's resistance to President Bill Clinton's attempts to fulfill his campaign promise and overturn the ban on homosexuals serving openly in the military is sometimes perceived as being in conflict with majority American views on the issue. This perception led to a

significant number of colleges and universities to ban military recruiters and Reserve Officers Training Corps (ROTC) programs from their campuses in protest of the military's policy.[66] But the polling data does not support the perception. At the time of the debate concerning any potential change in the policy, the majority of Americans still believed that a gay lifestyle was incompatible with military service.[67] Over time, the attitudes of Americans have shifted and acceptance of homosexuals serving openly in the military has become the norm.[68] As America's attitude evolved, so did the military's; polls indicate that nearly three quarters of service members are accepting of homosexuals serving openly.[69]

Policy Implications and Recommendations

The United States military regularly engages allies and partners around the world in an effort to build relationships, reduce mistrust, and foster an understanding of how each side thinks and views national security.[70] As important as it may be to develop these international relationships, developing and maintaining a healthy relationship with the American public is of vital importance to national security and the well-being of our military institutions. The U.S. military needs to formulate and place a top priority on implementing an engagement plan with the American people. The following are recommended courses of action for inclusion in a comprehensive engagement plan:

- Expand the Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) program, with specific emphasis on establishing ROTC programs at elite institutions.[71]
    - The obvious intent behind this is to place a uniformed ROTC cadet on more campuses to provide the opportunity to interject a military voice into the academic arena, while additionally allowing a more academic voice to be heard within the armed forces.[72] It is assumed that the interaction

between a uniformed ROTC student who is representing the military, and the general campus civilian population would give each side a better perspective of the others' points of view, and would promote mutual understanding. It is also believed that by having future soldiers educated in an environment that is inclined to be skeptical or critical of the military, those soldiers would learn about and fully appreciate the diversity of American society.[73]

    - This approach does have its drawbacks. The typical ROTC student is just starting his/her foray into military life and culture. Subsequently, the ROTC student may not possess the requisite knowledge to adequately educate fellow students or respond accurately to questions regarding military policy, strategy or culture. Additionally, ROTC is a program with a high price tag and low output.[74] Given the current fiscal climate and the anticipated down-sizing of the overall force, the military would be hard-pressed to justify establishing additional routes to commission for officers that it doesn't require.

- Encourage retired flag officers to serve as adjunct professors at elite civilian institutions.[75]

    - This may assist in educating the public, but it would not add to the cultural competence of the active component. Additionally, it would not add to the emotional connection between members of the public and those who serve it.

- It relies upon the target institutions to invest their resources in a course of instruction that they may not believe they have a vested interest in.

- Place senior active duty officers as adjunct professors at civilian institutions.
  - This would involve developing cooperative relationships with target institutions to develop an undergraduate course on national security, military affairs and the civil-military relationship. It might involve bringing money to the table to fund both active duty and reserve officers who have graduated from one of the Senior War Colleges to fill instructor positions at the schools that agree participate in the program. Ideally the officers selected to perform this role would attend in-residence Joint Professional Military Education for a year and then report to an undergraduate university as a professor for two years. After two years the senior officer would return to standard military duties. This would enable the students to learn from and build a relationship with a member of the military.
  - In order for the government to invest in educating young adults on the military and national security issues during an austere fiscal environment, reprioritization of military spending will be required. A potential area for reprioritization could be to disestablish the flight demonstration teams of the U.S. Navy and Air Force and utilize the savings to fund higher education efforts. The U.S. Navy's Blue Angels' FY12 budget request of $38.7 million[76] is a hefty bill to pay to "enhance Navy recruiting, and credibly represent Navy and Marine Corps aviation to the United States

and its Armed Forces to America and other countries as international ambassadors of good will."[77]

- Include key civilian personnel from various organizations across the government, international bodies and NGOs to participate in any of the numerous military exercises that are conducted each year.
    - With the increasing need to rely upon interagency cooperation to respond to ambiguous and complex situations it is vitally important to address the negative implications of any potential civil-military gap in the institutional realm. Enabling these personnel to attend, and to observe first-hand the military planning process will educate them on the military's capabilities and limitations and will increase their knowledge about how to interact with the U.S. Military.[78]
    - To take this even further, it may pay dividends to develop a personnel exchange program similar to those that the services use between themselves and foreign militaries. In conducting prolonged exchanges of personnel between military and civilian organizations, the desired outcome would be a common understanding on when and how as (well as how not to) coordinate with the military in order to meet sought-after objectives. Establishing mutual understanding will enable actors to focus on key practical considerations for civil–military coordination, avoid duplication, identify gaps and ensure best use of available resources,[79]

Conclusion

Today's all-volunteer force is vastly different from the post-WWII military that relied upon conscription for personnel. The AVF is better educated and more

representative of the nation than the draft-era military, and requires fewer people to successfully wage war.[80] It has served the United States exceptionally well over the past four decades, particularly during those periods that the nation has adequately funded operational training and modernization efforts, ensuring an exceptionally competent force with high morale.

The AVF currently enjoys high approval ratings from the American public[81], despite the public's general lack of knowledge about the military institutions that defend it. However this could change as the AVF is reduced to a size more commensurate with the level of the external physical threat, and the fiscal constraints the nation faces. As the perceived threat to America decreases and the percentage of the overall population that actively participates in military service decreases, there is a risk, albeit small, that the friction between the military and the society it serves may increase due to the inherent differences required by social and functional competencies.

Subsequently, it is imperative that senior civilian and military leaders continue to monitor any civil-military gaps and engage the public, particularly as debates about the future size, structure, and composition of the U.S. military assume new prominence in the political landscape. In order to ensure the continued effectiveness and readiness of the military, these leaders must assume the responsibility to ensure mutual understanding and work cooperatively to minimize the military-civilian gap.[82]

Endnotes

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